

ROCKY LEE STEVENS,)
)
Plaintiff,)
)
v.) No. 4:11CV2120 MLM
)
DEBRA JO ASMUS,)
)
Defendant.)

This matter is before the Court upon the motion of plaintiff, an inmate at Warren County Jail, for leave to commence this action without payment of the required filing fee. For the reasons stated below, the Court finds that plaintiff does not have sufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee and will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$8.10. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). Furthermore, based upon a review of the complaint, the Court finds that the complaint should be dismissed for lack of jurisdiction pursuant to Fed.R.Civ.P. 12(h)(3).

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), a prisoner bringing a civil action in forma pauperis is required to pay the full amount of the filing fee. If the prisoner has insufficient funds in his or her prison account to pay the entire fee, the Court must assess and, when funds exist, collect an initial partial filing fee of 20 percent of the

greater of (1) the average monthly deposits in the prisoner's account, or (2) the average monthly balance in the prisoner's account for the prior six-month period. After payment of the initial partial filing fee, the prisoner is required to make monthly payments of 20 percent of the preceding month's income credited to the prisoner's account. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The agency having custody of the prisoner will forward these monthly payments to the Clerk of Court each time the amount in the prisoner's account exceeds \$10, until the filing fee is fully paid. Id.

Plaintiff has submitted an affidavit and a certified copy of his prison account statement for the six-month period immediately preceding the submission of his complaint. A review of plaintiff's account indicates an average monthly deposit of \$40.50, and an average monthly balance of \$8.36. Plaintiff has insufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee. Accordingly, the Court will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$8.10, which is 20 percent of plaintiff's average monthly deposit.

28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis if the action is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. An action is frivolous if it "lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact." Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 328 (1989). An action is malicious if it is

undertaken for the purpose of harassing the named defendants and not for the purpose of vindicating a cognizable right. Spencer v. Rhodes, 656 F. Supp. 458, 461-63 (E.D.N.C. 1987), aff'd 826 F.2d 1059 (4th Cir. 1987).

To determine whether an action fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, the Court must engage in a two-step inquiry. First, the Court must identify the allegations in the complaint that are not entitled to the assumption of truth. Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 129 S. Ct. 1937, 1950-51 (2009). These include “legal conclusions” and “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action [that are] supported by mere conclusory statements.” Id. at 1949. Second, the Court must determine whether the complaint states a plausible claim for relief. Id. at 1950-51. This is a “context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense.” Id. at 1950. The plaintiff is required to plead facts that show more than the “mere possibility of misconduct.” Id. The Court must review the factual allegations in the complaint “to determine if they plausibly suggest an entitlement to relief.” Id. at 1951. When faced with alternative explanations for the alleged misconduct, the Court may exercise its judgment in determining whether plaintiff’s conclusion is the most plausible or whether it is more likely that no misconduct occurred. Id. at 1950, 51-52.

The Complaint

Plaintiff, an inmate at the Warren County Jail, brings this action against defendant Debra Jo Asmus, seeking damages in the sum of \$30,000 and an order directing the defendant to return property. The complaint contains no factual allegations in support of plaintiff's claim. Instead, plaintiff merely states that he is "entitled to my belongings," and he attaches to the complaint a lengthy list of items of personal property and their value. On the civil cover sheet submitted with the complaint, plaintiff asserts diversity of citizenship as the basis for jurisdiction, but he also indicates that both he and the defendant are Missouri citizens. Plaintiff describes his cause of action as "theft, property damage, slander, [and] defamation of character."

Discussion

Plaintiff's complaint will be dismissed pursuant to Fed.R.Civ.P. 12(h)(3) for lack of jurisdiction. Diversity jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1332 requires (1) complete diversity of citizenship between plaintiff and defendant and (2) an amount in controversy that exceeds \$75,000, exclusive of interest and costs. Plaintiff's complaint fails to establish either requirement. Plaintiff acknowledges that he and defendant are Missouri citizens, and he is seeking damages in the total amount of \$30,000. It is also noted that plaintiff does not invoke the Court's federal question

jurisdiction and alleges no facts from which such jurisdiction may be inferred. See 28 U.S.C. § 1331.


Accordingly,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that plaintiff's motion to proceed in forma pauperis [Doc. #2] is **GRANTED**.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the plaintiff shall pay an initial filing fee of \$8.10 within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order. Plaintiff is instructed to make his remittance payable to "Clerk, United States District Court," and to include upon it: (1) his name; (2) his prison registration number; (3) the case number; and (4) that the remittance is for an original proceeding.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk shall not issue process or cause process to issue upon the complaint because the Court lacks subject matter jurisdiction of this action.

Dated this 22nd day of December, 2011.



CAROL E. JACKSON
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE